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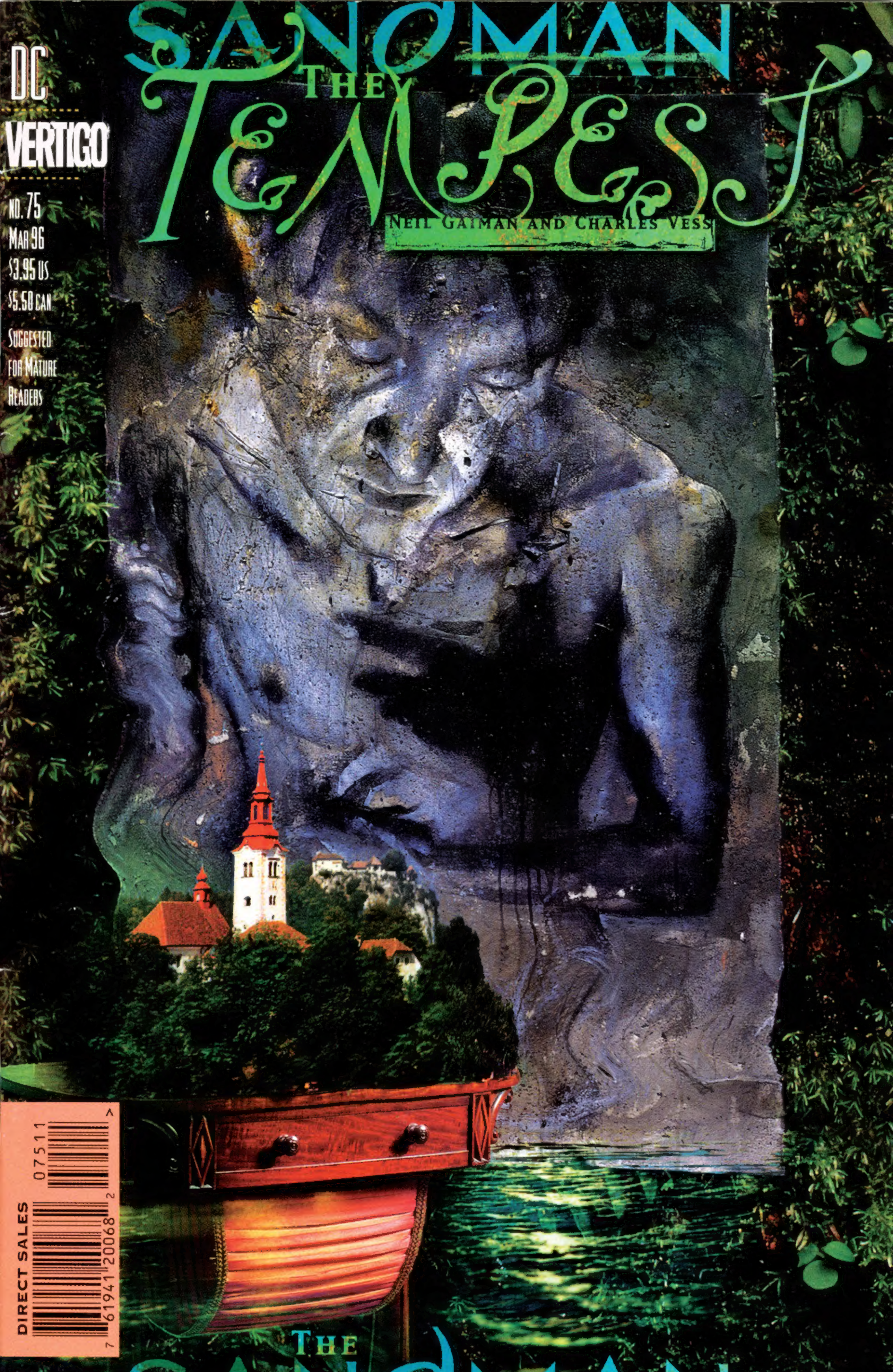
SANDMAN

THE TEMPEST

NEIL GAIMAN AND CHARLES VESS



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THE SANDMAN

Actus Primus. Scena Prima.

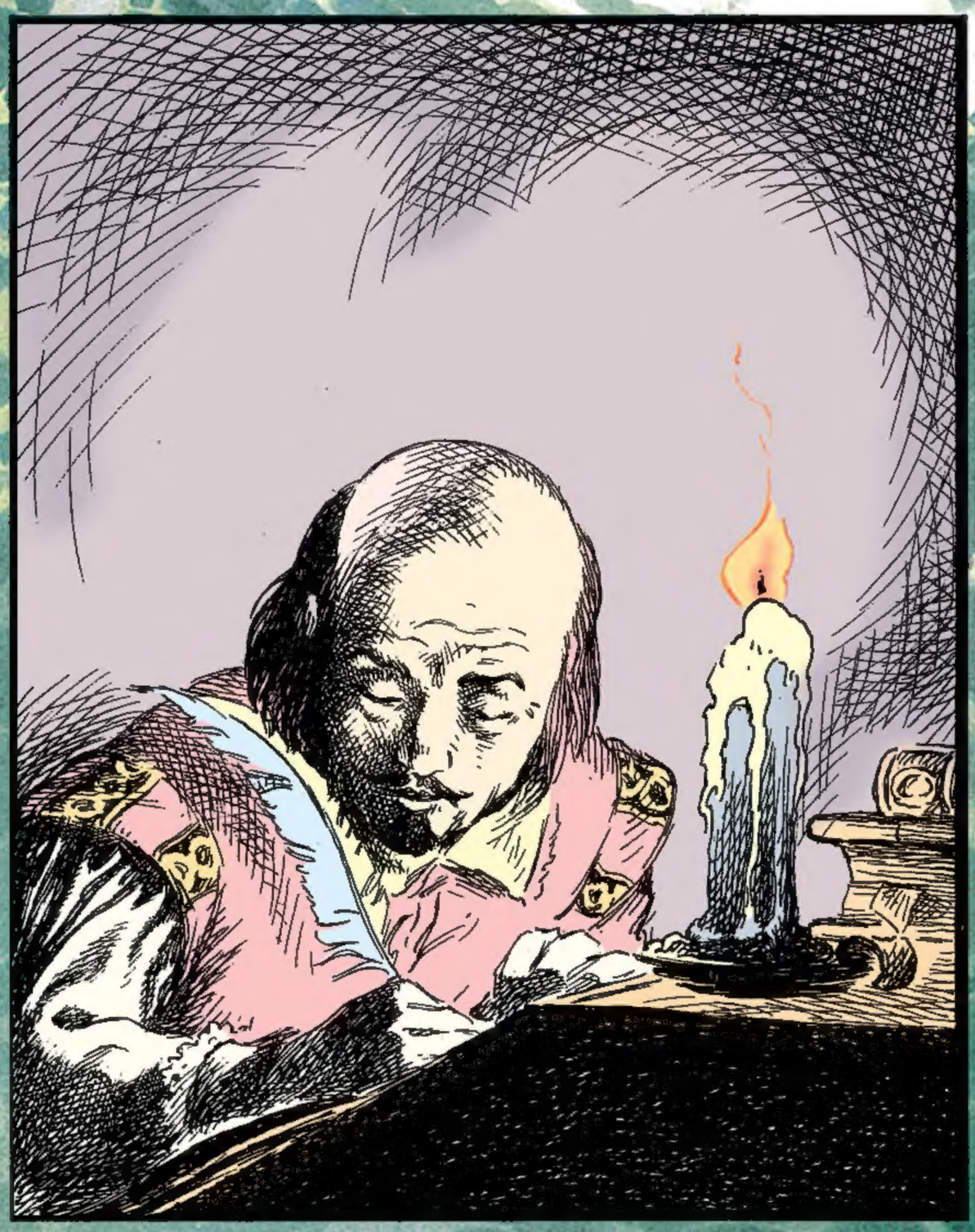
A Tempestuous noise of Thunder and Lightning heard.

Enter a Ship-master and a Boatswain.

Mast. Boatswain.

Boats. Here, master: what cheer?

Master. Good: Speak to th' mariners: fall to't yarely, or we run ourselves aground: bestir, bestir.



YOU'RE WRITING, FATHER.

MM. THAT I AM.

WHAT WOULD YOU BE A-WRITING, FATHER?

A PLAY, JUDITH.

NOT A FUNNY POEM?

A PLAY.

AND WILL YOU *READ* IT TO ME, FATHER, WHEN IT IS DONE?

AND MAKE THE VOICES ALSO?

AYE, WHEN 'TIS DONE.

MOTHER SAID YOU'D NOT BE WRITING ANY MORE.

SHE'LL BE RIGHT ABOUT *THAT* SOON ENOUGH.

WHAT'S IT ABOUT, THEN, THE NEW PLAY? WHERE DID YOU FIND THIS STORY?

I FOUND IT IN MY HEAD, JUDITH. IT IS A FAIRY TALE...

IT'S ABOUT A LOVELY YOUNG GIRL, JUST LIKE *YOU*, MY DEAR, WHO LIVES ON A DESERTED ISLAND WITH HER OLD FATHER, WHO IS A POWERFUL MAGICIAN, AND IS SECRETLY THE EXILED DUKE OF MILAN.

AND HOW A GALLANT PRINCE COMES AND TAKES HER AWAY FROM THE ISLAND.

I WILL LIKE IT SO *VERY* MUCH. IS IT A COMEDY?

...YES.

MOTHER SAYS THAT WE WOULD BE MUCH RICHER HAD YOU WRITTEN NOTHING *BUT* COMEDIES.

SHE SAYS NO ONE GOES TO THE THEATRE TO BE MADE GLUM.

AH.

MOTHER SAYS THAT MISTER JONSON TOLD HER THAT YOUR PLAYS WILL SOON BE FORGOT, BY THE COURT. THAT *ALL* THEY WANT NOW IS MASQUES...

THEN I SHALL PUT A MASQUE IN THIS.

OH.

WHY?

BECAUSE, AS YOU SAY, IT IS THE COURT FASHION TO INCLUDE MASQUES. AND I AM WRITING THIS PLAY FOR THE *KING*.

THE *KING* HIMSELF ASKED *YOU* FOR A *PLAY*? OH, *FATHER*. WHY DID YOU NOT *TELL* US?

THERE ARE OTHER KINGS THAN SCOTTISH JIMMY, JUDITH.

OH! YOU MUST NOT CALL HIM THAT.

THEY CALL HIM WORSE THAN *THAT* AT COURT.

THEY CALL HIM QUEEN JAMES.

WHAT NONSENSE ARE YOU TELLING THE GIRL *NOW*, WILL?

NOT *NONSENSE*, MY DEAR: NEITHER AIRY MOONSHINE NOR THE FLEETING LIGHT OF A WILL O' THE WISP. I WAS, INSTEAD, TELLING HER HOW OUR SOVEREIGN LORD IS KNOWN IN THE COURT.

IDIOT. TELL THE GIRL THAT, AND SHE'LL BE TELLING IT ALL OVER STRATFORD, AND THEN WHEN THEY ASK WHERE SUCH SEDITIOUS STUFF AND NONSENSE COMES FROM, IT'LL BE YOU THAT'S--

AYE, AND THEY'LL CUT OUT MY EYES AND THROW ME IN THE TOWER, AND THEY'LL MAKE A GREAT PIE OF MY HUMBLES AND MY LIGHTS AND--

ENOUGH! NOT ANOTHER *WORD!* NOT *ONE!* I SHALL *NOT* LISTEN. JUDITH, OFF TO YOUR ROOM!

YOU FILL HER SILLY HEAD WITH YOUR STUFF AND NONSENSE. SHE'S SIX-AND-TWENTY YEARS OF AGE, AND *STILL* NOT MARRIED. WILL YOU HAVE HER DIE AN OLD MAID?

WHY DO YOU NOT ADVISE HER TO DO WHAT MANY ANOTHER LADY OF HER ADVANCING YEARS HAS DONE TO SNARE A HUSBAND?

AND WHAT WOULD *THAT* BE?

WHY, TO SET A SNARE WITH HER GLANCE AND BAIT IT WITH HER QUOINT. THEN, WHEN HER BELLY SWELLS, HER POOR SILLY SWAIN WILL HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO MAKE AN HONEST WOMAN OF HER.

WAS THAT NOT WHAT *YOU* DID, WHEN *YOU* WERE SIX-AND-TWENTY?

AYE.

I SHALL GET NO MORE WORK DONE HERE, TONIGHT;

AND WHERE D'Y'THINK YOU ARE GOING *NOW*, MAY I ASK?

THEREFORE I SHALL TAKE ME TO THE HOUSE OF THE BARLEY AND THE GRAPE.

THE *INN*. GOD-LOOK-YOU, HE'S TO THE INN. I MARRIED A *SOT!* GO TO THE INN, THEN, I CARE NOT.

YES, MY DEAR.

SILLY MAN! IT'S *RAINING* OUT THERE! YOU'LL CATCH YOUR *DEATH!*

The Tempest

Written by Neil Gaiman - additional material by William Shakespeare
Illustrated by Charles Vess & Lettered by Todd Klein
Colored by Daniel Vozzo & Separations by Digital Chameleon
Edited by Karen Berger & Associated by Shelly Roeberg
Special thanks to Bryan Talbot, John Ridgway and the Mysterious Mister Zed
Sandman characters created by Gaiman, Kieth & Dringenberg

AHAH. IT IS THE PLAGUE-CROW.

PLAGUE-CROW? AND FOR *WHY* IS IT A PLAGUE-CROW?

THE CAUSE OF *PLAGUE* IS *SIN*. THE CAUSE OF *SIN* IS *PLAYS*. THUS PLAYS CAUSE PLAGUES. *ERGO* THOSE WHO CAUSE PLAYS. WELL, THEY ARE THE VERIEST PLAGUE-CROWS...

PAY THEM NO MIND, MASTER WILL.

I SHALL PAY THEM NO MIND, MISTRESS QUINEY.

WHAT'LL YOU BE DRINKING? SOMETHING TO WARM YOU? WE'VE MULLED WINE, PIPING HOT...

THAT WOULD BE GOOD, YES.

COME OVER *HERE*, BY THE FIRE, LET'S DRY YOU OFF A BIT, SOAKED TO THE *SKIN* YOU ARE! IT'S A BAD NIGHT TO BE OUT.

TOM! SOME MULLED WINE OVER HERE, THAT'S A BOY!

THANK YOU, MISTRESS QUINEY.

I SAW YOUR JUDITH THIS MORNING, MASTER SHAKESPEARE.

I AM SURE THAT YOU DID.

WELL, *SHE* SAYS "HELLO, TOMMY," SO I SAYS "HELLO, MISS JUDITH,"

AND *SHE* SAYS, "'TIS A FINE MORNING," AND *I* SAYS, "THAT IT IS,"

AND *SHE* SAYS, "BUT IT MIGHT RAIN LATER," AND *I* SAYS, "THAT IT SURELY MIGHT."

AND IT DID.

I'M NOT *HAVING* YOU MAKING FUN OF MASTER WILL. WHEN MY DICKON, MAY HE REST EASY, WENT TO LONDON -- AND A POWERFUL BIG PLACE IT *WAS*, FILLED WITH SMOKE AND FOGS, HE SAID, SUCH THAT A MAN COULD NOT TAKE A STEP IN FRONT OF HIS FACE --

YES, YES, MISTRESS QUINEY.

AND HE SPENT HIS *LAST* PENNY TRYING TO MAKE 'EM LIFT THE TAX ON STRATFORD MERCHANTS, AND HE WAS SO DEEPLY IN DEBT THAT THEY WOULD SCARCELY LET HIM KEEP THE *BRITCHES* TO COVER HIS *BUM*, WHY THEN 'TWAS MASTER WILL PAID HIS DEBTS AND SENT HIM BACK TO STRATFORD--

YOU'VE *TOLD* US--

AND, AFTER THAT, DO YOU KNOW WHAT MY DICKON, GOD GIVE HIS SOUL PEACE, WOULD SAY TO ME? HE WOULD SAY, "MASTER WILL MAY BE BUT A CRAFTER OF GODLESS PLAYS, BUT HE'S *STILL* A BETTER MAN THAN MANY A SO-CALLED HONEST BAKER OR FARRIER."

YOU ALREADY SAID--

AND SHALL I TELL YOU SOMETHING MORE? *HIS* JUDITH TOLD MY TOMMY THAT MASTER WILL WAS ASSISTING THE SCHOLARS WHOM THE KING HIMSELF CHARGED--

MISTRESS QUINEY. ÷'hem.÷

OH, MASTER WILL.

WHERE IS THAT GOOD-FOR-NOTHING TOMMY BOY? HE SHALL BE THE DEATH OF ME, I SWEAR IT.

HOLA! WINE! WINE FOR TWO DROWNED RATS AND THEIR POOR RAT QUEEN!

GOOD SIRS, I AM SURE THAT YOU ARE EVEN THIS VERY MOMENT THINKING: WHO ARE THESE NOBLE GENTLEMEN, AND WHAT HAVE THEY CONCEALED BENEATH THIS BLANKET?

WELL...

YOUR FIRST QUESTION IS EASILY ANSWERED: WE ARE SAILOR-MEN --I AM A BOSUN, MY FRIEND HERE IS A COOK. OUR DOXY IS INDEED, AS SHE APPEARS, A DOXY.

AND BENEATH THIS BLANKET?

FEH! IT SMELLS LIKE A FISH! LIKE A SALTED COD'S HEAD!

NO FISH, GOOD LADY, BUT A SAVAGE MAN.

A MAN?

WHY, GOOD SIRS, KIND MASTERS, 'TIS THE SAD CORPSE OF AN INDIAN, FROM THE DISTANT BERMUDAS: A NOBLE SAVAGE IN HIS OWN LAND, ONE OF THE CHILDREN OF ADAM: ADORNED WITH THE TRAPPINGS OF HIS KIND.

AND FOR BUT A SHILLING WE WILL REVEAL HIM TO YOU.

SIR?

DID I SAY A SHILLING? FOR MERELY A *SIXPENCE*, LET US SAY, A PENNY FROM EACH OF YOU.

HERE'S *MY* PENNY.

AND MINE.

YOU, SIR? 'TIS A NATURAL CURIOSITY. MOST EDUCATIONAL TOO. AND CHEAP AT TWICE THE PRICE.

NO.

DESPITE OUR PENNILESS FRIEND IN THE CORNER HERE, I AM DELIGHTED TO ANNOUNCE THAT WE HAVE A FULL EIGHT PENNIES IN THE HAT.

THEN *HERE*, GENTLES, IS OUR FINE SAVAGE.

YOUR FINE *CODFISH*, MORE LIKE.

EEK!

OH! OH! 'TIS A *RAWHEAD* OR A *BLOODYBONES!* A *MONSTROUS THING!* I NEVER *SAW* SUCH A THING! NOT IN *ALL* MY BORN DAYS!

AND SUCH A TERRIBLE *SMELL!*

HE WAS WOKEN IN THE SMALL HOURS OF THE MORNING BY VOICES RAISED IN RAUCOUS SONG.

♪ ...WOULD CRY TO A SAILOR, "GO HANG" ♪

♪ SHE LOVED NOT THE SAVOR OF TAR NOR OF PITCH-- ♪

♪ BUT A TAILOR MIGHT SCRATCH HER WHERE'ER SHE DID ITCH... ♪

♪ SO TO SEA BOYS AND LET HER GO HANG-- ♪

♪ GOOO HAAAANGGGG

♪ SO TO SEA BOYS AND LET HER GO HANG! ♪

THEIR WOMAN WAS NOWHERE TO BE SEEN.

HE WATCHED THEM UNTIL THEY WERE OUT OF SIGHT, THEN HE WENT BACK TO SLEEP.

Miranda: 'Tis far off
And rather like a dream than an assurance
That my remembrance warrants. Had I not
Four or five women once that tended me?

Prospero:
Thou hadst, and more, Miranda,
But how is it
That this lives in thy mind?
What seest thou else
In the dark backward and
abysm of time?

C. Vess '86

DARK BACKWARD AND ABYSM OF TIME...?

HMM. IT'LL SERVE.

IF THOU REMEMBEREST AUGHT ERE THOU CAM'ST HERE, HOW THOU CAM'ST HERE THOU MAYST...

WILL? YOUR GOOD-FOR-NOTHING FRIEND IS UP FROM LONDON. I *TOLD* HIM YOU WERE NOT TO BE DISTURBED--

MY FRIEND?

MY COMMENTS ON PERICLES NOTWITHSTANDING, WILLIAM, I TAKE PRIDE IN REGARDING MYSELF AS YOUR FRIEND.

HONEST BEN JONSON!

SO. WHAT DO YOU WRITE?

MY FINAL PLAY.

AH.

YOU WRITE WITH SUCH *FACILITY*, WILL.

FOR *ME*, I ANGUISH OVER EVERY WORD. I AM CONVINCED THAT *YOUR* WORK WOULD BE IMPROVED IF YOU TOOK MORE TIME OVER IT.

PERHAPS, BEN.

IS THERE *WINE*, GOOD MISTRESS ANNE? I HAVE TRAVELLED FOR MANY LEAGUES, AND I SWEAR MY THROAT IS PARCHED WITH THE DUST OF TRAVEL.

AND A LITTLE FOOD WOULD NOT GO AMISS. BUT I WOULD NOT *WISH* TO TROUBLE YOU.

I'LL SEE WHAT'S IN THE PANTRY.

YOUR *LAST*, YOU SAY? WELL, PERHAPS IT *IS* FOR THE BEST THAT YOU RETIRE YOUR QUILL.

YOU KNOW WHAT I THOUGHT OF YOUR MOST RECENT OFFERINGS.

YES. YOU TOLD ME WHAT YOU THOUGHT.

AND PERHAPS THE WELL OF YOUR TALENT *HAS* FINALLY RUN DRY, WILL. WOULD WE ALL WERE WISE ENOUGH TO CALL A HALT, WHEN WE WERE DONE. I TRUST *I* SHALL ...

YOU MUST APPRECIATE MY HONESTY, THOUGH. WHEN YOU WRITE *WELL*, GOOD WILL, AM I NOT ALWAYS THE *FIRST* TO PRAISE YOU?

OF COURSE.

MOTHER SAYS TO TELL YOU THAT THERE'S SMALL BEER AND COLD CHICKEN LAID OUT IN THE PARLOR.

SMALL BEER? WHERE'S THE *MADEIRA?* THE *CANARY?* THE *SACK?*

AT THE INN.

SO. WHERE DOES *THIS* ONE COME FROM? HAVE YOU BEEN RAIDING POOR HOLINSHED AGAIN? OR DOES PLUTARCH BEAR THE BRUNT OF YOUR DEPREDATIONS?

BITS OF THINGS, HERE AND THERE. BUT IT'S MOSTLY MINE, FOR ONCE.

D'YOU KNOW--}muurp{--WHY YOU'RE ALWAYS TAKING YOUR PLOTS FROM OTHER PEOPLE, WILL?

NOT REALLY, BEN. BUT I HAVE NO DOUBT YOU WILL ENLIGHTEN ME.

I SHALL= LOOK AT ME.

IN MY TIME I'VE BEEN A SOLDIER, A SCHOLAR, A PAUPER, A DUELIST, AN ACTOR, A TRANSLATOR *AND* A SPY. I'VE KILLED A MAN IN A DUEL. I'VE THRICE BEEN IMPRISONED.

RISKING MY *LIFE* FOR MY RELIGION, I PROUDLY TAKE COMMUNION FROM THE CHURCH OF ROME, GOD LOOK YOU. I'VE LIVED LIFE TO THE FULL.

WHAT'VE *YOU* DONE, WILL? A LITTLE TANNING, HELD HORSES, A LITTLE ACTING, A LITTLE WRITING.

I'VE LIVED AS MUCH *LIFE* AS YOU, BEN.

BUT *I* HAVE MET *ALL* SORTS OF PEOPLE... FROM THE LOWEST TO THE MOST HIGH. THUS, I UNDERSTAND 'EM.

I WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THAT ALL ONE NEEDS TO UNDERSTAND PEOPLE IS TO BE A *PERSON*.

AND I *HAVE* THAT HONOR.

I SUPPOSE YOU *DO*. LOR', THIS PUTS ME IN MIND OF THE OLD DAYS, SPARRING OVER SACK AT THE MERMAID.

YOU WERE SPARRING, BEN. I WAS ONLY EVER TALKING.

SO...TELL ME ABOUT YOUR NEW PLAY. DOES IT GO *WELL?*

NOT REALLY, NO.

I AM WRITING A SCENE IN WHICH MIRANDA, OUR VIRGINAL AND INNOCENT HEROINE, SITS AND LISTENS AS HER FATHER PROSPERO, THE EXILED AND DEPOSED DUKE OF MILAN, AND A WISE MAGICIAN, *LABORIOUSLY* EXPLAINS THE PLOT TO HER.

I TRUST THEY WILL FINISH SOON, AND ALLOW ME TO GET ON TO MORE INTERESTING MATTERS. THERE IS A *SPIRIT* I NEED TO BRING ON...

THE ENCHANTER'S SPRITE? A FAMILIAR?

YES.

HMM...

PERCHANCE THE ENCHANTER COULD SEND THE GIRL TO *SLEEP* WHILE HE TALKS TO THE FAMILIAR.

AYE, BEN...

PERHAPS...

I SAW THEM BUILDING A GREAT NUMBER OF BONE-FIRES, YESTERDAY, AS I CAME UP FROM LONDON.

THEY MEMORIALIZE THAT *UNFORTUNATE* AFFAIR--

D'YOU MEAN, THAT MOST *EVIL* AND TERRIBLE PAPIST PLOT TO EXPLODE AND BURN OUR PARLIAMENT AND KING?

A FEW POOR SILLY CATHOLICS--

AND WHAT EXACTLY WAS *YOUR* PART IN ALL THAT, HONEST BEN? I NEVER QUITE UNDERSTOOD.

I, UH, *HRRUMPH*, ASSISTED HIS MAJESTY AND HIS MAJESTY'S OFFICERS --SHOWED THEM THAT NOT *ALL* CATHOLICS WERE UNTRUSTWORTHY...

AND WHAT MIGHT *THAT* BE, YOUNG MAN?

IT'S GUY FAWKES, MASTER. HIM AS TRIED TO BLOW UP PARLIAMENT. WE'LL ***BURN*** HIM TONIGHT, ON THE FIRES.

IT'S ***FOOLISHNESS***. THEY'LL FORGET ALL THIS SOON ENOUGH.

IT'S THE ***LAW***, BEN. NOVEMBER THE FIFTH MUST ALWAYS BE CELEBRATED.

THEY'LL FORGET.

YOU THINK SO? THEN LET *US* GIVE THEM SOMETHING THEY WILL NOT FORGET.

IT'LL ***SERVE***. THERE: ***NOW***, WE'LL TEACH IT TO THAT URCHIN, AND HE'LL TEACH IT TO HIS FRIENDS, AND IT'LL LAST A ***HUNDRED YEARS***...

I DOUBT IT.

"REMEMBER, REMEMBER, THE FIFTH OF NOVEMBER, GUNPOWDER, TREASON AND PLOT..." THERE:

BEN, CAN YOU ***COMPLETE*** THE DOGGEREL?

UM. LET ME SEE. ***HMM***. NO, I HAVE IT. "I SEE NO REASON WHY GUNPOWDER TREASON SHOULD EVER BE FORGOT." THERE.

HOW CAN YOU ABANDON THE SMOKE FOR ALL THIS, ALL THIS NOTHING?

DON'T YOU MISS ***LONDON***? THE BUSTLE? THE PEOPLE? THE BLACKFRIARS AND THE *GLOBE*? THE ***LIFE***?

THERE IS LIFE APLENTY ***HERE***, BEN.

AND HOW GO THINGS WITH YOU IN STRATFORD? ARE YOU NOT... WELL, LET ME PUT IT BLUNTLY... HOW GO THINGS WITH MISTRESS ANNE?

WE REMAIN ***CIVIL***. AND I SLEEP ON MY BED, IN MY ROOM, AND SHE SLEEPS IN HER BED, IN HERS.

AH.

I WAS REREADING YOUR SONNETS. THE ONES THORPE PUBLISHED.

I *TRUST* YOU ENJOYED THEM.

YOU SHOULD ***WINNOW*** THEM, WILL. IN MY ESTIMATION, PERHAPS A DOZEN OR SO ARE WORTHY OF POSTERITY.

THE REST ARE ***PRATTLE***, NOT ART. THEY WILL DO ***NOTHING*** FOR YOUR REPUTATION.

STILL, THEY ACHIEVED THEIR PURPOSE, EH? THEY GOT YOU INTO BED.

THAT'S WHAT A ***SONNET*** IS ***FOR***, EH? SPREADING A PAIR OF FAIR LEGS.

I AM TOO ***OLD*** FOR ALL THAT NONSENSE.

DO YOU ***THINK*** OF HER EVER? DARK-HEARTED ***SHREW*** THAT SHE PROVED HERSELF...

I RECALL NO SHREWS, BEN.

AH, WILL. YOU ARE *TOO* GOOD-NATURED A FELLOW. I HAVE NEVER HEARD YOU SAY A BAD WORD ABOUT A LIVING SOUL.

WHAT ***NOW?***

THIS WILL BE MY *LAST* PLAY, BEN.

SO YOU ***SAID.***

IN SPITE OF ANYTHING I MIGHT HAVE SAID ABOUT *PERICLES* ...WELL... YOU ARE A ***BORN*** PLAYWRIGHT, WILL. IT'S IN YOUR BLOOD, AND IN YOUR BONES. I AM ***SURE*** IT WILL TAKE THE COLD OF DEATH TO TUG THE PEN FROM YOUR HAND.

I ***HOPE*** NOT. I SHALL BE PLEASED TO PUT DOWN MY PEN.

TRULY?

TRULY.

And, for thou wast a spirit too delicate
To act her earthly and abhorr'd commands,
Refusing her grand hests, she Fid confine thee,

FATHER?

YES, JUDITH.

HOW GOES YOUR PLAY?

IT GOES. TOO *SLOW*, TOO *SLOW*. BUT--IT GOES.

WILL IT MAKE ME *LAUGH*, FATHER?

PER*HAPS*. I HAVE IN MIND A SCENE, LATER, WHERE TWO DRUNKEN SAILORS AND THE SAVAGE STEAL THE WIZARD'S BOOKS, AND TRY TO COMMAND THE ISLE'S MAGICKS; BUT EVERY SPELL THEY TRY MISCARRIES UPON THEM.

IT WILL BE A GOOD SCENE FOR SOME CLOWNS, AND MANY SPIRITS, AND SUCH.

I *WISH* I COULD READ. I *WISH* I WERE NOT SO DULL.

YOU ARE NOT *DULL*. YOU'RE MY BABY. MY LITTLE GIRL.

By help of her more potent ministers,
And in her most unmitigable rage,
Into a cloven pine;

within which rift
Imprisond, thou didst painfully remain
A dozen years; within which space she died,
and left thee there;

FATHER?

WHEN I WAS A GIRL AND I SAW A STAR FALLING--

--OR WHEN HAMNET AND I WOULD SPLIT THE CHICKEN-BONE MEN CALL THE MERRYTHOUGHT--MY WISH WAS ALWAYS THAT I HAD A FATHER WHO WAS A SMITH, OR A FLETCHER, OR EVEN A MILLER.

WHY WAS THAT?

BECAUSE YOU WOULD HAVE BEEN *HERE* WITH US, IN STRATFORD.

I AM HERE WITH YOU *NOW.*

WHY DID YOU HAVE TO GO TO LONDON? *WHY* MAKE UP THE PLAYS? *WHY* ACT? I WARRANT YOU COULD HAVE FOUND GOOD, *HONEST* WORK IN STRATFORD.

PERHAPS.

I WOULD HAVE GIVEN THE *WORLD* TO HAVE HAD YOU HERE-- WHEN I TRULY *WAS* A LITTLE GIRL.

I WAS *SO* ENVIOUS OF HAMNET, WHEN HE WENT WITH YOU THAT SUMMER.

HE WROTE LETTERS HOME, AND MOTHER, OR SUSANNE, WOULD READ TO ME WHAT HE SAID, AND I WOULD WEEP, FOR I COULD NOT BE THERE WITH YOU.

AND MOTHER *ALSO* WOULD WEEP. *MOTHER* WEPT MOST OF ALL.

DID YOU NOT *THINK?* DID YOU NOT *CARE?*

I...FOLLOWED A DREAM.

I DID AS I SAW BEST, AT THE TIME.

NOT MUCH LONGER, JUDITH.

NOT *TOO* LONG, NOW.

Prospero. Awake, dear heart, awake! Thou hast slept well. Awake!

Miranda The strangeness of your story put Heaviness in me.

Pros. Shake it off. Come on; We'll visit Caliban my slave, who never Yields us kind answer.

Miranda 'Tis a villain, sir, I do not love to look on.

WELL, IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'LL BE GETTING YOUR *WISH* SOON ENOUGH, WILLIAM.

YOUNG TOMMY QUINEY PAYS HIS COURT TO OUR JUDY-LASS.

YES.

I *WISH*... I *WISH* SHE WOULD FIND HER A MORE SUITABLE SUITOR.

HE IS PLEASANT ENOUGH.

HE HAS TOO MUCH OF HIS *FATHER* IN HIM. THE OLD DEVIL CAME TO LONDON AND SPENT EVERY *PENNY* HE HAD ON WHORES. I HAD TO LEND HIM THIRTY POUNDS TO GET HIM OUT OF TROUBLE.

"YOU ARE **NEVER** SATISFIED, MY WILL. YOU DO NOT WANT WHAT YOU WANTED AS SOON AS YOU **HAVE** IT, BUT MUST **ALWAYS** BE PINING AND PLAINING AFTER SOMETHING MORE."

WHAT WIN I,
IF I GAIN THE THING I SEEK?
A DREAM, A BREATH, A FROTH
OF FLEETING JOY.
WHO BUYS A MINUTE'S MIRTH
TO WAIL A WEEK?
OR SELLS ETERNITY TO GET
A TOY?

MORE OF YOUR PRETTY-PLAY-NONSENSE? WELL, I CAN GIVE YOU THE ANSWER TO **THAT** ONE.

"WHO BUYS A MINUTE'S MIRTH TO WAIL A WEEK?" THAT'S **PEOPLE** DO THAT. LIKE OLD QUINEY SPENDING HIS PENNIES ON THE WHORES OF LONDON TOWN.

YOU KNOW THE TROUBLE WITH **YOU**, WILL? YOU LIVE IN **WORDS**, NOT IN THE REAL WORLD. YOU **THINK** TOO MUCH. YOU **DREAM** TOO MUCH.

WHEREAS I CONSIDER MYSELF A PRACTICAL MAN.

OF **COURSE** YOU DO, MY DEAR.

PRACTICAL MEN **ALWAYS** DESERT THEIR WIVES AND RUN AWAY TO MAKE UP PRETTY TALES; AND WRITE PRETTY SONNETS TO PRETTY GIRLS AND PRETTY BOYS.

Caliban.
You taught me language: and my profit on't
Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
For learning me your language!

DECEMBER, 1610.

A good evening to you, Master Shakespeare.

I KNOW YOU, SIR, DO I NOT?

You do.

BUT YOU HAVE *CHANGED* SINCE I LAST SAW YOU.

Not I, but you, good Will.

I CANNOT SLEEP.

No?

I AM MEANT TO BE AMENDING THEM, FOR A PRINTER; BUT I DO NOT.

NO. I AM LOOKING AT OLD PLAYS OF MINE...

I CANNOT EVEN *READ* THEM WITH PLEASURE. I BEGIN, BUT I SEE NO *ART*. JUST *ARTIFICE*.

THIS SPEECH MEANS *NOTHING*, I WROTE IT BUT TO COVER WHILE BURBAGE SANK A BEER OFFSTAGE AND CHANGED HIS GOWN.

THIS LADY'S SPEECH IS *PRETTY* BUT *POINTLESS*-- YOUNG CORDELL THAT WEEK SULKED UNTIL I GAVE HIM SOMETHING TO MAKE THE PIT CHEER.

How goes the NEW play, Will Shakespeare?

YOUR PLAY? IT GOES...

I HAVE WRITTEN *WORSE*. I HAVE WRITTEN *FASTER*.

BUT I AM NO LONGER YOUNG, AND I AM TIRED.

Hmm.

WHY DO YOU WANT THE PLAY? *WHY* DO YOU NEED *ME* TO WRITE IT? WHY AM I *DOING* THIS?

Why? Because we made a bargain, Will Shakespeare. Two plays.

YES. THE FIRST PLAY I WROTE AS A GIFT FOR... YOUR *FRIENDS*...

BUT *THIS* IS... *YOUR* PLAY. FOR YOU.

Yes.

WHY *THIS* PLAY?

WILL? YOU'RE *SLEEPING.*

THUH? GRMMBZZ. BRUH.

"GO TO THY BED, SILLY MAN."

"GO TO THY BED."

What have we here?
a man or a fish?
dead or alive?

A fish! He smells like a fish;
a very ancient and fish-like smell;
a kind of not-of-the-newest
poor-John. A strange fish!

Were I in England now,
as once I was,
and had but this fish painted,
not a holiday fool there but
would give a piece of silver.
There would this monster
make any man;

any strange beast there makes a man;
when they will not give a doit to relieve
a lame beggar,
they will lay out ten to see a dead indian.

DEAD OR ALIVE

THERE WOULD THIS MONSTER MAKE ANY MAN

TEN TO SEE A DEAD INDIAN

C.DESS·95

...AND MASTER LIVELY PARTICULARLY WISHED ME TO CONVEY TO YOU HIS DELIGHT WITH THE WORK YOU DID ON THE PSALMS WE SENT TO YOU.

THERE WERE SOME WHO FELT THAT WE MIGHT HAVE MADE A MISTAKE; AND THEY HAVE NOW EATEN THEIR WORDS.

I WOULD THAT I WERE A POET. I WOULD THAT I HAD YOUR GOD-GIVEN GIFT OF WORDS.

AND I WOULD THAT I HAD SOME HEBREW, AND MORE GREEK.

AH, BUT THAT IS A MATTER OF APPLICATION, NOT INSPIRATION.

INSPIRATION? DOES A CARPENTER RELY ON INSPIRATION?

HE RELIES ON HIS TOOLS.

AND WORDS ARE MY TOOLS.

I ...YES... I TAKE YOUR POINT. INDEED, YOU USE YOUR TOOLS WELL. BUT THE CRAFT, THE TALENT, THIS COMES FROM GOD, FROM WHOM ALL TALENTS COME.

AND IF IT DOES NOT?

I WOULD NOT HAVE TAKEN YOU FOR AN ATHEIST, MASTER WILL.

NO, NO, YOU MISTAKE MY MEANING. WHAT IF A MAN DID NOT TAKE HIS TALENT FROM GOD? WHAT IF HE KNEW NOT FROM WHERE IT CAME--WHAT IF IT CAME FROM SOME DEVIL, SOME SETEBOS?

WHAT IF HE BARGAINED WITH THE POW'RS OF THE DARK FOR TALENT, FOR POWER, FOR CRAFT?

THEN HE WOULD BE DAMNED. WHY ASK YOU THIS?

I... I HAVE A MAGICIAN, IN THE PLAY I WRITE, WITH MAGICAL BOOKS AND ROBE AND STAFF, AND SPIRITS WHO DO HIS WILL.

BUT HE IS A GOOD MAN, AND I WOULD NOT SEE HIM DAMNED LIKE KIT'S POOR *FAUSTUS*...

AH! THEN, AT THE PLAY'S END, LET HIM *BREAK* HIS STAFF AND *BURN* HIS BOOKS, AND *RENOUNCE* ALL MAGICS.

AND HE WILL NO LONGER BE DAMNED?

PRAYER IS A *MOST* EFFICACIOUS THING. WHAT DID YOU SAY IN THAT PSALM, EH?

"GOD IS OUR REFUGE AND OUR STRENGTH, A VERY PRESENT HELP IN TROUBLE. THEREFORE WILL NOT WE FEAR, THOUGH THE EARTH BE REMOVED, AND THOUGH THE MOUNTAINS BE CARRIED INTO THE MIDST OF THE SEA."

FINE PHRASING, SIR. *FINE* PHRASING.

YOU *KNOW*, GOOD WILL, WHEN *FIRST* YOU ASKED ME OF YOUR MAGICIAN, I THOUGHT, FOOLISHLY, YOU SPOKE OF YOURSELF.

I AM NO MAGICIAN, MY FRIEND. WE HAD BETTER MAKE HASTE BACK TO THE HOUSE.

WHEN THE *SNOW* IS SETTLED I MUST BE ON MY WAY, WILL.

JANUARY, 1611.

HAH!

LISTEN TO *THIS*, MY DEAR.

NOW IN THE *PLAY* FERDINAND--THE YOUNG PRINCE--AND MIRANDA--THE BEAUTEOUS MAIDEN--ARE GIVEN TO EACH OTHER, AFTER SOME WOOD-CHOPPING ON FERDINAND'S PART, BY PROSPERO, THE MAGICIAN. AND HE SUMMONS HIS SPIRITS TO PERFORM A MASQUE FOR THEM.

AT THE END OF THE MASQUE HE JUMPS UP, SCATTERS THE MASQUERS, RECOLLECTS THE PLOTS AGAINST HIM, THEN SAYS TO FERDINAND--

'HEM,

OUR REVELS NOW ARE ENDED. THESE OUR ACTORS, AS I FORETOLD YOU, WERE ALL SPIRITS, AND ARE MELTED INTO AIR, INTO THIN AIR;

AND, LIKE THE BASELESS FABRIC OF THIS VISION, THE CLOUD-CAPP'D TOWERS, THE GORGEOUS PALACES, THE SOLEMN TEMPLES, THE GREAT GLOBE ITSELF,

YEA, ALL WHICH IT INHERIT, SHALL DISSOLVE AND, LIKE THIS INSUBSTANTIAL PAGEANT FADED, LEAVE NOT A RACK BEHIND.

WE ARE SUCH STUFF AS DREAMS ARE MADE ON, AND OUR LITTLE LIFE IS ROUNDED WITH A SLEEP.

THERE, IS THAT NOT FINE?

I AM *PLEASED* YOU MENTIONED *WOOD-CHOPPING*, WILL, FOR WOOD-CHOPPING *CERTAINLY* NEEDS A-DOING, ELSE WE SHALL *FREEZE* IN OUR BEDS THIS NIGHT.

AND MY SPEECH...?

FOR *HOW* YOU EXPECT ME TO COOK FOR YOU WITHOUT FIREWOOD I WOULD NOT KNOW. AND YOU WOULD BE THE *FIRST* TO COMPLAIN, WERE THERE NO ROASTED GOOSE, NOR NO HOT PUDDING.

YES, MY DEAR.

Alonso. I long
To hear the story of your life,
which must
Take the ear strangely.

Prospero. I'll deliver all;
And promise you calm seas,
auspicious gales,
And sail so expeditious,
that shall catch
Your royal fleet far off.
—My Ariel, chick,
That is thy charge.
Then to the elements
Be free, and fare thou well!—

C. Vess '06

Please you, draw near.

Exeunt Omnes.

Is it finished?

IT IS.

Then we are quits, Will Shakespeare. It remains only for me to thank you, and wish you well in your life to come.

SIR, I *THINK* I HAVE EARNED A LITTLE MORE THAN *THAT.*

FOR A GOODLY PART OF MY LIFE I HAVE BEEN IN YOUR ***SERVICE. NO*** MASTER WOULD FREE A PRENTICE WITHOUT SO MUCH AS A GLASS OF WINE IN THE MASTER'S PARLOR.

Sir, is this your will?

SIR, IT *IS.*

I see. Then we shall take a glass of wine in my house.

YOUR HOUSE. YES. IS IT... IS IT *FAR*?

Aye. Very far. So tell me, Will: do you see yourself reflected in your tale?

I WOULD BE A *FOOL* IF I DENIED IT. I AM PROSPER, CERTAINLY; AND I TRUST I *SHALL.*

BUT I AM ALSO *ARIEL*--A FLAMING FIRING SPIRIT, CRACKLING LIKE LIGHTNING IN THE SKY.

AND I AM DULL CALIBAN. I AM DARK ANTONIO, BROODING AND PLANNING, AND OLD GONZALO, COUNSELING SILLY WISDOM.

AND I AM TRINCULO, THE JESTER, AND STEPHANO THE BUTLER, FOR THEY ARE CLOWNS AND FOOLS, AND I AM ALSO A CLOWN AND A FOOL. AND ON OCCASION, DRUNKARDS.

FOR MERCY'S SAKE, WHERE ARE WE?

We walk to my house, Will. There is nothing to fear.

We were talking of reflections, of the play mirroring life.

NOTHING TO FEAR? I THOUGHT I HEARD THE BEATING OF MIGHTY WINGS, AS IN A NIGHTMARE THAT RODE ME WHEN I WAS A BOY...

You do. But have no fear of them. Let us talk of tales and plays.

TALES. YES.

WELL, MY OWN FINE WORDS NOTWITHSTANDING, LIFE IS NO PLAY. WE MEET PEOPLE ONCE, AND NEVER SEE THEM AGAIN. THERE IS NO SHAPE TO EVENTS, NO POINT AT WHICH WE TURN TO THE AUDIENCE FOR THEIR PRAISE.

NO TIME AT WHICH WE STEP BEHIND THE STAGE, TO SEE THE ACTORS CHANGING THEIR WIGS, AND PAINTING THEIR FACES, AND MUTTERING THEIR LINES.

But that is precisely where you are now, Will.

Welcome to my house.

So, we shall go to my parlor, and drink wine, as you have requested.

SIR? DO I DREAM?

Indeed. What wine would you like to drink?

WHEN I WAS *YOUNG*, MY FIRST MONTH IN LONDON, A GYPSY-GIRL GAVE ME WINE TO DRINK. IT WAS TAWNY-COLORED, AND SWEET AS HONEY, AND AFTER I HAD TAKEN A SIP, SHE KISSED ME, AND NO *KISS* HAS EVER TASTED FINER.

NOR NO *WINE* NEITHER.

YES. IT IS AS I REMEMBER. IT SUMMONS MANY MEMORIES... NOT ALL OF THEM GOOD.

BUT STILL, FOR *THIS*, AS FOR YOUR *OTHER* BOON, I THANK YOU.

WHY DID YOU *GIVE* THEM TO ME?

Give you what, Will?

THE *PLAYS*. THE *WORDS*. I DID NOT ASK FOR THEM...

I WOULD GIVE *ANYTHING* TO HAVE YOUR GIFTS, OR MORE THAN ANYTHING TO GIVE MEN DREAMS THAT WOULD LIVE ON LONG AFTER I WAS DEAD.

I'D BARGAIN, LIKE YOUR FAUSTUS, FOR THAT BOON....

I *SAID* THAT?

Yes.

AND WHAT *DID* YOU GIVE ME?

What you requested:

the power to give men dreams that would live on, after you were gone. And you gave me two plays.

WHY *ME*?

Because you had a gift, and the talent. Because you were no worse a man than many another. Because you had a good heart.

And because you wanted it ...so much...

YES, I *DID*... I REMEMBER. I WAS SO *YOUNG*. FIVE AND TWENTY...

LOOK AT ME *NOW*: A FAT OLD MAN, LUSTLESS AND LACKLUSTER, WITH MY TWO-SCORE YEARS AND SEVEN...

I DREAM OF BEING NOBODY AT ALL. MY EVERY THIRD THOUGHT IS OF THE GRAVE.

BUT *YOU* MUST HAVE LIVED LONGER THAN TWO SCORE YEARS AND SEVEN.

If I must.

WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED, HAD WE NOT MET, IN THE INN, TWENTY YEARS AGO?

It is not given to any man to know what would have happened.

BUT *YOU* KNOW.

I can hazard an educated guess.

What would have happened? You would have written a handful of other plays, in quality no better than, say, "*The Merrye Devil of Edmonton*", and then you would have come home to Stratford.

You would have taught school, saved a little money. You would have bought a house, let it out, and bought another.

You would have made your money in bricks and mortar -- enough for your family's coat of arms, enough to make them forget your father's setbacks.

You would not have been satisfied with your life; and, from time to time, you would have bored your children with the tales of your years in London, your days on the stage.

AND *HAMNET*. MY BOY. WOULD HE HAVE LIVED?

NO. DO NOT TELL ME THAT. YOU HAVE SAID TOO MUCH ALREADY.

I WONDER...

I WONDER IF IT WAS *WORTH* IT.

WHATEVER *HAPPENED* TO ME IN MY LIFE, HAPPENED TO ME *AS* A WRITER OF PLAYS.

I'D FALL IN LOVE, OR FALL IN LUST. AND AT THE HEIGHT OF MY PASSION, I WOULD THINK, "SO *THIS* IS HOW IT FEELS," AND I WOULD TIE IT UP IN PRETTY WORDS.

I *WATCHED* MY LIFE AS IF IT WERE HAPPENING TO SOMEONE ELSE.

MY SON DIED. AND I WAS HURT; BUT I *WATCHED* MY HURT, AND EVEN *RELISHED* IT, A LITTLE, FOR NOW I COULD WRITE A *REAL* DEATH, A *TRUE* LOSS.

MY HEART WAS BROKEN BY MY DARK LADY, AND I WEPT, IN MY ROOM, ALONE; BUT WHILE I WEPT, SOMEWHERE INSIDE I SMILED.

FOR I KNEW I COULD TAKE MY BROKEN HEART AND PLACE IT ON THE STAGE OF *THE GLOBE*, AND MAKE THE PIT CRY TEARS OF THEIR OWN.

AND NOW... I AM NO LONGER YOUNG. MY HEALTH IS NOT GOOD, AND MY DAUGHTER CONSORTS WITH A LECHEROUS APE, WHICH HER FANCY AMENDS TO A GALLANT PRINCE.

MY WIFE SLEEPS IN HER FATHER'S BED, FAR FROM ME: AND SHE TREATS ME LIKE A FOOLISH CHILD.

AND PROSPERO AND MIRANDA, CALIBAN AND GONZALO, AETHEREAL ARIEL AND SILENT ANTONIO, ALL OF *THEM* ARE MORE REAL TO ME THAN SILLY, WISE BEN JONSON; SUSANNA AND JUDITH; THE GOOD CITIZENS OF STRATFORD; THE WHORES AND OYSTER-WOMEN OF LONDON TOWN...

You are well-loved.

BECAUSE I MEAN NO ONE HARM; AND BECAUSE I KEEP MY OPINIONS TO MYSELF. IT MATTERS NAUGHT.

KIT *MARLOWE* WAS NOT WELL-LOVED: HE WAS *NOT* A GOOD MAN; BUT HIS FAUSTUS WILL *NEVER* BE FORGOT --AND *HE* MADE NO BARGAIN WITH YOU.

You think not?

AS A GOOD CHRISTIAN, I MAY NOT HOLD WITH PAGAN THINGS. AND IT SEEMS TO ME THAT YOU ARE A PAGAN THING.

I am of your faith. I am of all faiths, in my fashion.

YOU PLAY WITH WORDS. AM I BOUND TO *HELL*, FOR TRAFFICKING SO WITH YOU?

Only if it would give you pleasure to go there. It is a cheerless place.

THEY GAVE ME SOME OF THE PSALMS TO PRETTIFY.

MY DAUGHTER IS PROUD OF ME; MY WIFE AVERS THAT MAKING THE BIBLE INTO ENGLISH IS THE WORK OF THE DEVIL, AND THAT WHEN THE NEXT KING COMES BY, HE'LL HAVE MY HEAD FOR IT.

AH, VANITY, VANITY. I HID MY NAME IN A PSALM.

IF HE *KNEW* THAT THERE WAS WITCHCRAFT BEHIND MY PLAYS, THE KING *WOULD* HAVE MY LIFE.

There is no witchcraft, Will, no magic. I opened a door within you, that was all.

SO WHY *THIS* PLAY?

IT IS A TOPICAL PIECE -- I TOOK THE INSPIRATION FOR IT FROM THE WRECK OF THE SEA-VENTURE IN THE BERMUDAS LAST YEAR.

THE STORY IS MERELY THE SORT OF FAIRY STORY *ALL* PARENTS TELL TO AMUSE THEIR CHILDREN.

THERE IS SOME OF *ME* IN IT. SOME OF JUDITH. THINGS I SAW, THINGS I THOUGHT. I STOLE A SPEECH FROM ONE OF MONTAIGNE'S ESSAYS. AND CLOSED WITH AN UNEQUIVOCALLY CHEAP AND HAPPY ENDING.

WHY DID YOU NOT WANT A *TRAGEDY*? SOMETHING LOFTY, SOMETHING DARK, A TALE OF A NOBLE HERO WITH A TRAGIC FLAW?

THE TEMPEST

I wanted a tale of graceful ends. I wanted a play about a King who drowns his books, and breaks his staff, and leaves his kingdom.

About a magician who becomes a man. About a man who turns his back on magic.

THE TEMPEST

"But this rough magic I here abjure..."

"I'll break my staff, Bury it certain fathoms in the earth, And deeper than did ever plummet sound I'll drown my book..."

BUT-- WHY?

That is not your concern, Will.

NOT MY CONCERN? I GAVE YOU TWENTY YEARS. I WROTE YOUR PLAYS. AND IF YOU "OPENED THE DOOR" THEN I STILL DID THE WORK.

I PUT EACH WORD DOWN, I MADE THE ACTORS TALK. I GAVE YOUR STORIES THE FORMS IN WHICH THEY WILL BE REMEMBERED.

I HAVE EARNED AN ANSWER TO MY QUESTION. WHY?

Because I will never leave my island.

YOU LIVE ON AN ISLAND?

I am... in my fashion... an island...

BUT THAT CAN CHANGE. ALL MEN CAN CHANGE.

BUT...

I am not a man.

And I do not change.

I asked you earlier if you saw yourself reflected in your tale.

YES.

I do not. I MAY not. I am Prince of stories, Will; but I have no story of my own. Nor shall I ever.

But I thank you.

IT IS OVER.

WHY, I SWEAR, WILL, BY OUR LADY'S TEARS, YOU CANNOT HAVE BEEN TO YOUR BED THIS NIGHT.

WHAT IS OVER, SILLY MAN?

ALL OF IT. THE BURDEN OF WORDS.

I CAN LAY IT DOWN, NOW. LET IT REST.

YOU MAKE NO SENSE, WILL, WITH ALL YOUR PRATTLING.

FORGIVE ME, MY LOVE.

YOU *LEFT* ME THE EPILOGUE TO WRITE, MY PALE FRIEND. AND TO WRITE IT WITH NO MAGIC BUT MINE OWN WORDS.

VERY WELL.

NOW MY CHARMS ARE ALL O'ERTHROWN, AND WHAT STRENGTH I HAVE'S MINE OWN, WHICH IS MOST FAINT.

Now my charms are all o'erthrown, And what strength I have's mine own, Which is most faint. Now 'tis true I must be here confined by you Or sent to Naples.

NOW 'TIS TRUE I MUST BE HERE CONFINED BY YOU OR SENT TO NAPLES.

Let me not
Since I have my dukedom got
And pardoned the deceiver, dwell
In this bare island by your spell;

But release me from my bands
With the help of your good
hands:

Gentle breath of yours my sails
Must fill, or else my project fails,
Which was to please.

NOW I WANT
SPIRITS TO ENFORCE,
ART TO ENCHANT;

AND MY
ENDING IS DESPAIR
UNLESS I BE RELIEV'D
BY PRAYER,

Which pierces so,
that it assaults
Mercy itself,
and frees all faults.

AS YOU FROM CRIMES
WOULD PARDONED BE,
LET YOUR INDULGENCE
SET ME FREE.

JUDITH SHAKESPEARE MARRIED TOM QUINEY IN FEBRUARY 1616. IT WAS NOT A HAPPY MARRIAGE.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE DIED ON APRIL 23RD, 1616, ON HIS BIRTHDAY, FROM AN ILLNESS SAID TO HAVE BEEN CONTRACTED FOLLOWING AN EVENING'S DRINKING WITH BEN JONSON.
HE WAS FIFTY-TWO YEARS OLD.

HE WROTE NOTHING MORE ALONE, AFTER *THE TEMPEST*.

ANNE SHAKESPEARE DIED IN 1623, AT THE AGE OF SIXTY-SEVEN, THE SAME YEAR THE FIRST "FOLIO" COLLECTION OF HER LATE HUSBAND'S PLAYS WAS PUBLISHED.

NEIL GAIMAN. OCTOBER 1987 ~ JANUARY 1996.

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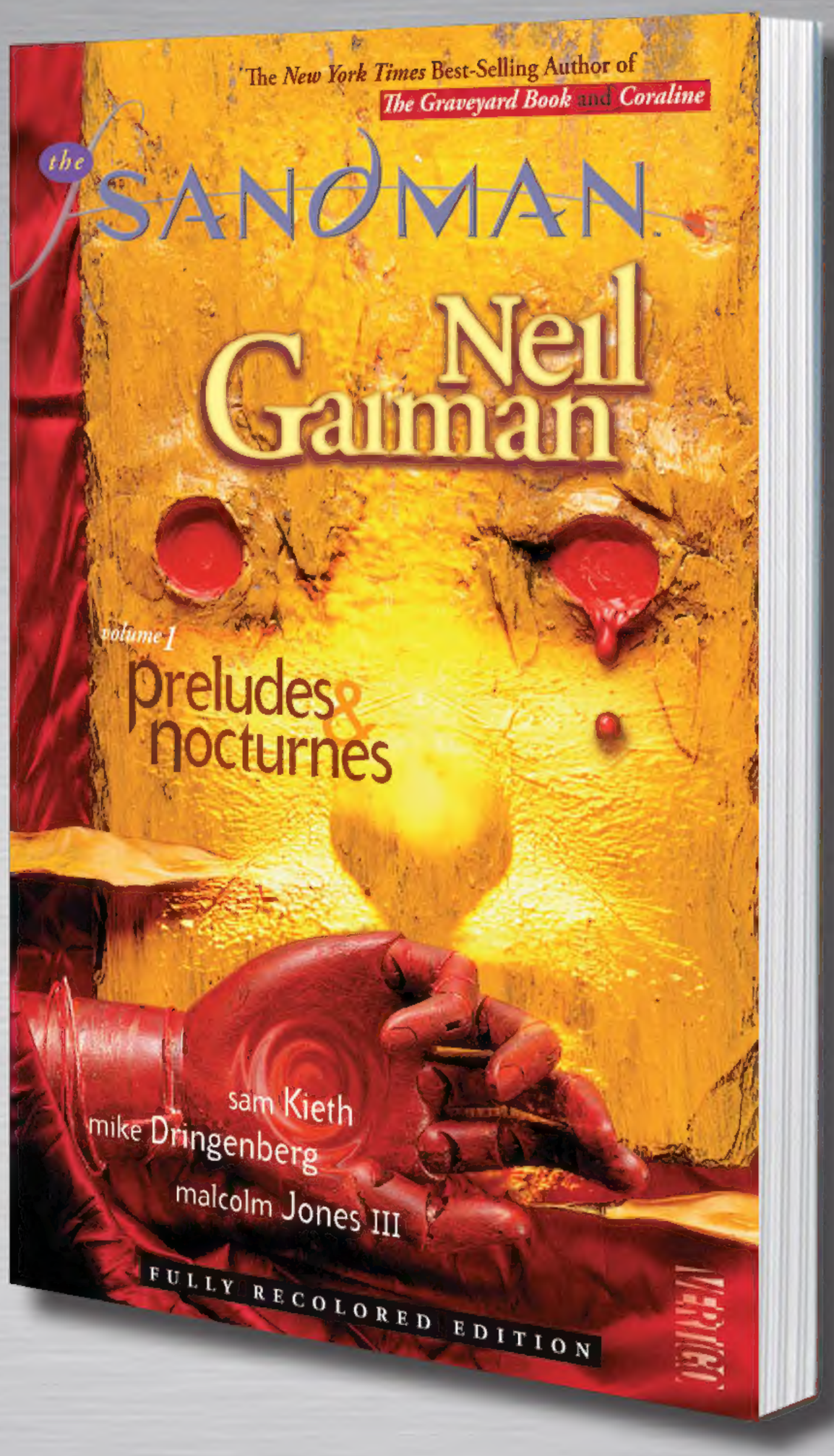

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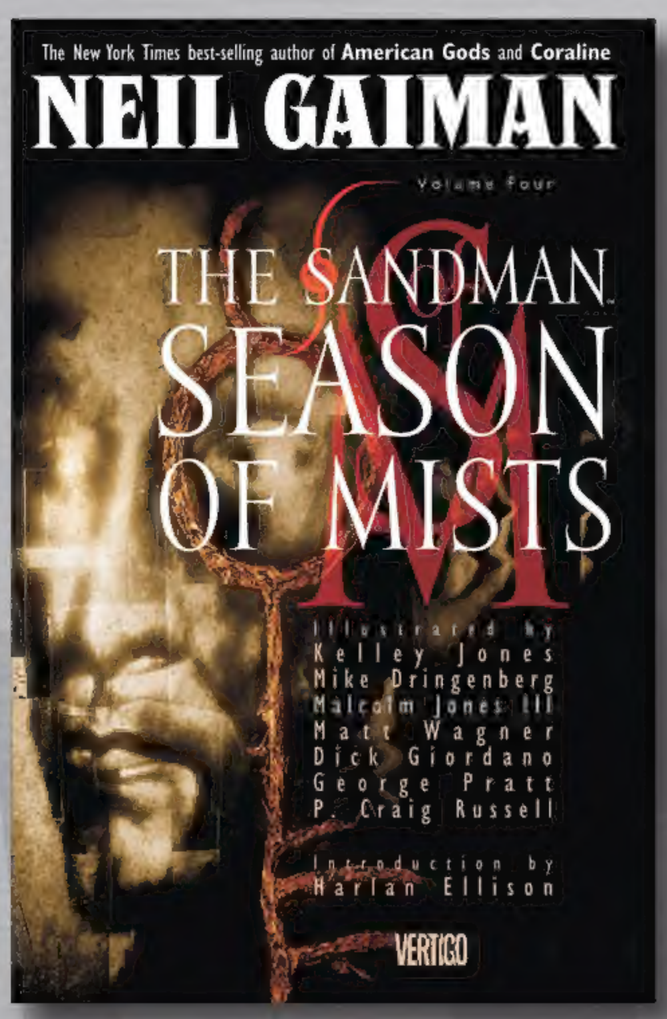

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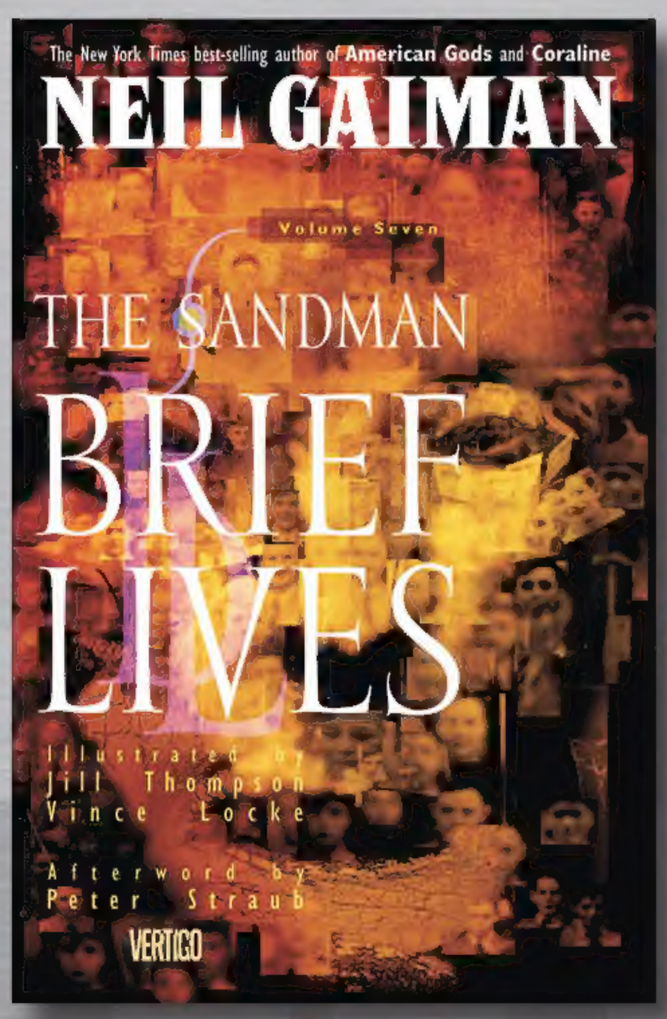

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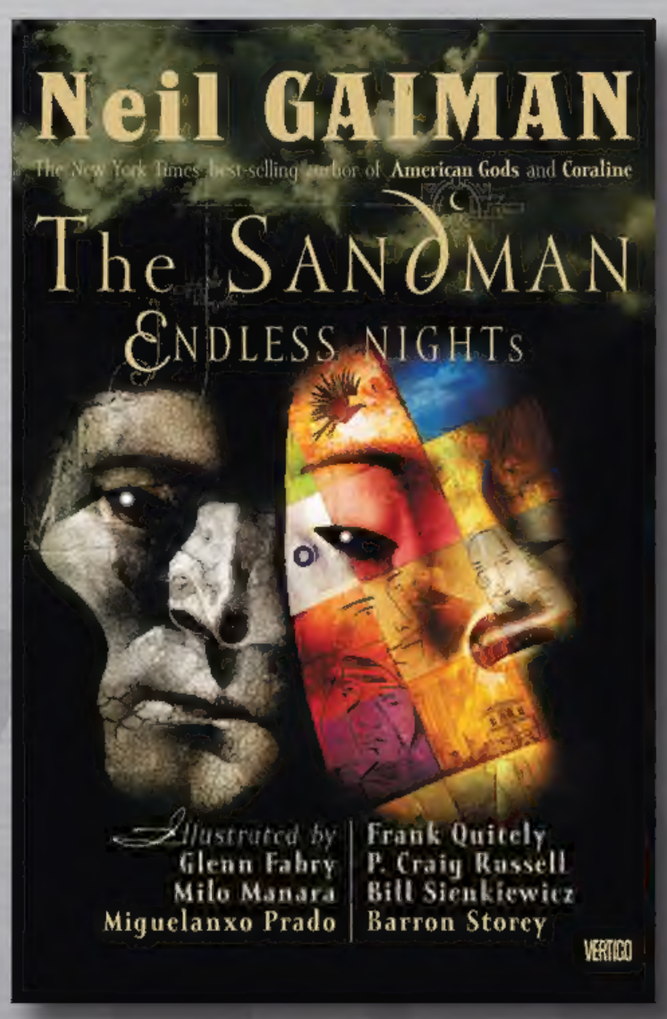

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